**Examiner comments essay example 5**

**Grade awarded: D**

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| Criterion A | 3 |
| Criterion B | 3 |
| Criterion C | 2 |
| Criterion D | 5 |
| Total | 13 |

This is a weak essay. The slight alteration to the prescribed title from “roles” to “a role” either reflected a limited understanding or contributed to it. In either case the teacher would have been well advised to step in here and advise the student to use the prescribed title in its exact original form. The narrow focus of the essay on language as purely a means of communication has greatly limited the range of ideas that are dealt with. While there is no required content for an answer, the essay might have benefited from a consideration of, for example, issues around language and its relationship to values, thoughts, identity, meaning or experience in the different areas of knowledge. As it stands, one might observe that a student hardly needed a TOK course to realize that language was needed to communicate, and that in the course of the essay so many TOK areas are mentioned that depth of analysis in any one of them is unlikely.

**Criterion A: Understanding knowledge issues**

**Mark awarded: 3**

The essay consistently identifies issues of marginal importance (for example, lines 60–61, that state that NaCl is scientific notation for sodium chloride) or dubious relevance (for example, lines 35–36, “more work may have been put into it”; line 43, “a teleprompter…”) and fails to develop these issues in depth or detail. The surprising claim in lines 52–53 that “neither written nor spoken language have any significant importance to the arts” can be seen, charitably, as the student discussing only dance and music, say, and not considering literature or poetry.

Some relevant knowledge issues are identified, but these are not explored (for example, lines 85–87, “Through documents… the past” and the final lines, “However… differently”). As a result, while the essay is in part relevant, the understanding is best described as rudimentary and the attempted links to ways of knowing are not effective.

**Criterion B: Knower’s perspective**

**Mark awarded: 3**

While the essay has a clear student voice, it does not connect knowledge issues to the student’s own experience, and the narrowness of focus mitigates against the possibility of independent thinking about knowledge issues. There are some appropriate examples (for example, lines 24–26, baby talk; lines 85–87, Egyptian hieroglyphics and Mayan inscriptions) though they are not well used. There is the glimmer of awareness of different perspectives in the final line and this just pushes the mark for this criterion to a 3.

**Criterion C: Quality of analysis of knowledge issues**

**Mark awarded: 2**

This is the weakest aspect of the essay: the initial poor interpretation of the prescribed title has limited the analysis throughout. Promising ideas are undeveloped and seem to have been introduced to little effect. For example, the student mentions symbols in line 5, and then states in lines 32–33 that they “can be understood just by looking at them”. Even where relevant knowledge issues are identified and some conclusion appears to be drawn (for example, lines 52–53, “therefore it can be said…”; line 80 “therefore we can see…”; line 92, “Therefore it can be seen…”; line 95,“To conclude it can be said…”), the conclusion seems to be stated rather than following from what has gone previously. While the student has given the initial impression of having constructed valid arguments, these do not stand up to even cursory scrutiny and the attempts at argument are unsuccessful.

There is some awareness of counterclaims (for example, line 42, “Although…”; line 65, “However…") but these are in general confused and do not provide enough evidence to progress beyond a level 2.

**Criterion D: Organization of ideas**

**Mark awarded: 5**

This essay’s strongest aspect is its organization. The student makes and explains an initial distinction (graphic/phonic) which is maintained throughout the essay with respect to different areas of knowledge. While this is an unhelpful analytic tool, it does mean that the essay is adequately structured overall, despite the occasional instance where there is a lack of clarity (for example, lines 11-12, “Both spoken… concrete”; lines 42–43). The reference to the Egyptians and Mayans required referencing, but this example is only of marginal importance to the essay and so does not affect the overall score for this criterion.